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DE RUEHKO #5034/01 3020829
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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9033
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 9795
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 1942
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 5849
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 4046
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 6456
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 7711
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RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SEOUL KOR PRIORITY
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 005034

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [JA](#) [KN](#)

SUBJECT: NGO'S OUTLINE DEFINITION OF PROGRESS ON ABDUCTION
ISSUE

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer. Reasons 1.4 (B) (D)

¶1. (C) Summary. Japan must receive a clear statement from Kim Jong-il that North Korea will return all the abductees, release some of the victims it still holds, and start negotiations with Japan on the process of accounting for the others in order for Tokyo to achieve "progress" on the abduction issue, representatives of AFVKN and NARKN, two leading abduction organizations, told Embassy Tokyo October 25. AFVKN and NARKN members, along with the Diet Parliamentary League, will travel to the United States in mid-November. A Japanese Kantei official returned from a recent U.S. visit believing that the United States is preparing to de-list the DPRK without regard for progress on abductions - a move he predicted would generate negative reactions from government and the public. End Summary.

Progress Defined

¶2. (C) Political officer met for two hours on October 25 with representatives of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (AFVKN) and The National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN). Representing AFVKN were Chairman Shigeru Yokota (father of abductee Megumi Yokota), Vice Chairman Shigeo Iizuka, and Secretary General Teruaki Masumoto. NARKN members included

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Chairman Katsumi Sato and Secretary General Ryutaro Hirata. AFVKN and NARKN are the leading non-governmental organizations dealing with the abduction issue.

¶3. (C) The groups related to Embassy Tokyo an outline of actions their organizations believe might constitute "progress" in resolving the abduction issue with the DPRK - a step that might allow the Japanese government to improve bilateral relations with North Korea:

-- Kim Jong-il must make a clear, definitive public statement/commitment/promise indicating that North Korea will return abductees living in the DPRK;

-- Following the public statement, North Korea must actually

return some (but not all) of the abductees; and,

-- "North Korea and Japan must start negotiations on the process of returning remaining abductees," and provide specifics regarding when and where survivors will be returned or accounted for. The negotiation would include providing a "rational" explanation regarding the fate of the dead. The groups, representatives promised to provide a coordinated written statement detailing their views on "progress" after consulting with Japanese government officials.

14. (U) (Note: On October 26, NGO representatives asked Embassy Tokyo to convey to Washington, as the groups' official written position, remarks given by former PM Shinzo Abe and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuhisa Shiozaki during Diet testimony on March 26 and June 4, 2007 respectively:

-- The settlement of the abduction issue is "the realization of the return of all abductee victims, full accounting of the truth and the handover of kidnappers."

-- Progress on the abduction issue is "that both Japan and the DPRK share common recognition of resolving the abduction issue and, on that condition, the DPRK takes concrete steps."
End note)

15. (C) The AFVKN and NARKN members stressed that completion of the three steps would constitute "progress," but not "resolution." Resolution, according to family members, would require:

-- North Korea to pay compensation for the abducted;

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-- Pyongyang to hand over the kidnappers; and,

-- Punishment for those who ordered the abductions.

16. (C) The family members and supporters strongly indicated that a DPRK promise to simply re-investigate the abduction cases would not constitute "progress." They also adamantly opposed making direct overtures or requests for information about dead abductees, or opening the negotiations with requests for the same, fearing that any such inquiry might result in Pyongyang's killing of possible survivors. They urged the United States to be cautious in talking to the DPRK about the deaths of any abductees.

Meet PM Fukuda

17. (C) The abductee groups, representatives planned to meet with PM Yasuo Fukuda on October 26, at which time they planned to ask PM Fukuda to continue government efforts to return all abductees. Masumoto noted that Fukuda is less passionate on the abduction issue than former PM Shinzo Abe. He added, however, that Fukuda knows he must use the Prime Minister's role to resolve the issue.

FM Komura on Progress

18. (C) Hirata said the group had not heard media reports quoting FM Nobutaka Machimura as saying that the return of some abductees may constitute "progress." Hirata speculated that Machimura likely re-supposed that any such return of some abductees would only follow a clear statement from Kim Jong-il promising the return of all victims.

De-Listing

19. (C) The AFVKN and NARKN representatives expressed strong concern about what they believed to be U.S. plans to remove North Korea from the list of state sponsors of terrorism. Masumoto said those concerns were based on remarks made by the Secretary and EAP A/S Hill after DPRK negotiator Kim Gye-gwan said the United States promised to remove North Korea from the list. The abduction group members said they would like the United States to state publicly that Pyongyang will not be taken off the terror list absent progress on the abduction issue.

110. (C) In response, Embassy political officer stated that numerous U.S. officials, including the President, Deputy Secretary, and A/S Hill have publicly noted on various

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occasions that the abduction issue is important for the United States, and that the United States supports Japan's efforts on the issue. Within the Six-Party Talks framework, the United States agreed to begin the process of discussing the DPRK's removal from the list after the DPRK meets its obligations in the Six-Party process. One of those obligations is that Japan and North Korea must reach satisfactory settlement of the abduction issue. The Japanese government, by virtue of its participation in the Six-Party process, agreed to this approach in the February 2007 agreement.

Abductee Group Admonishes Media

111. (C) The day after the meeting with Embassy Tokyo, the abduction groups quickly rejected a Mainichi newspaper story, which described the Embassy meeting with AFVKN and NARKN as "unusual." The Mainichi story falsely reported that Embassy Tokyo officials had described the abduction issue as a "bilateral matter" to be resolved between Japan and the DPRK.

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NARKN admonished the newspaper with a statement on its Web site noting that abduction groups "often exchange opinions with the U.S. Embassy." The Web site message contained statements noting that Embassy officials stressed that the United States had not made a decision to de-list North Korea from the state sponsors of terrorism list, and that the President, Deputy Secretary, and EAP A/S Hill had indicated that the abduction issue is important to the United States.

U.S. Visit

112. (C) The AFVKN and NARKN members said they plan to visit the United States November 11-17. A group of Diet members who support the abduction victims will travel to the United States at about the same time, from November 14-17, they added. According to the AFVKN and NARKN representatives, the Diet group plans to exchange opinions with 13 Members of Congress, including Rep. Ilena Ros-Lehtinen, who has reportedly introduced a bill requiring the release of abductees as a prerequisite for the United States to de-list the DPRK for the state sponsor's list.

Kantei Official Pessimistic About De-listing

113. (C) Embassy Tokyo met separately with Cabinet Information and Research Office Councillor Takashi Minami October 24 to discuss his recent visit to Washington on the abductions issue. His general impression from his official and other meetings was that the United States is preparing to de-list the DPRK without regard for progress on abductions.8 Should this indeed turn out to be the case, Minami continued, the

abductee family groups and others will react very negatively.

The Government,s official reaction will also be very negative.8

SCHIEFFER